movement recorded for Snail Kite, and it illustrates an example of long-distance dispersal to habitat unsuitable for the species.

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Bismarck Crow *Corvus* (*orru*) *insularis* warrants species status

by Guy Dutson, Phil Gregory & Walter Boles

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The crow on Papua New Guinea's Bismarck islands (New Britain and New Ireland, including Umboi, Sakar, Witu, Lolobau, Watom, Duke of York, New Hanover and Djaul) has conventionally been treated as a subspecies of Torresian Crow *Corvus orru insularis* (e.g., Goodwin 1976, Madge & Burn 1994). However, Finch & McKean (1987) and Storer & Eastwood (1991) proposed that *C. o. insularis* is closer to Bougainville Crow *C. meeki* than

to *C. orru*, and Jones & Lambley (1987) treated it as a separate species. Based on our field experience, examination of specimens in the Australian Museum, Sydney, and The Natural History Museum, Tring (including 17 *insularis*), and the biometrics in Rowley (1970), we here compare *C. o. insularis* with New Guinea *C. o. orru* and Australian *C. o. cecilae*, which is similar but slightly longer tailed and winged. *C. o. latirostris* of Tanimbar and Babar is conventionally included within *C. orru* but Madge & Burn (1994) and White & Bruce (1986) suggested that *C. o. latirostris* may be a separate species; we are unfamiliar with this taxon in the field, and it is not considered further here.

The most distinctive feature of *C. o. insularis* is its call. Most commonly, it repeats short nasal calls e.g., *khah*, *kor* or *khot*; in many areas, its local name is *kotkot*. These calls sound very different from typical calls of *C. o. orru*, being higher pitched, shorter, more clipped and more rapidly repeated. Moreover, *C. o. insularis* very rarely gives longer more drawn-out calls at the end of series, as commonly heard from *C. o. orru*. As with *C. o. orru*, it has a range of other less common calls, including a much deeper raven-like repeated *ank* and, rarely, a popping call, and slurred *khe-aarh*. Typical *C. o. insularis* calls are shorter and less rolling than those of *C. meeki*, which in turn are distinct from those of White-billed Crow *C. woodfordi* on islands east of Bougainville.

C. o. insularis has a relatively short tail. The wing/tail ratio averages 2.0 (n = 9; SD = 0.083) whereas that of *C. o. latirostris* is 1.82 (n = 2; SD = 0.02), *C. o. orru* is 1.86 (n = 21; SD not given but estimated as 0.04 from data in Rowley 1970), *C. o. cecilae* is 1.80 (n = 162; SD estimated as 0.06) and *C. meeki* is 2.67 (n = 2; SD = 0.01).

C. o. insularis has pale grey feather bases, intermediate between the clean white bases of *C. o. orru* and *C. o. cecilae*, and the grey bases of *C. meeki* and various Australian 'raven' species, as well as a slightly but consistently different wing formula from *C. o. orru* and *C. o. cecilae*. The bill dimensions, structure and extent of feathering over the bill and proportions of the throat hackles are similar to *C. o. orru* and *C. o. cecilae*. *C. o. insularis* has pale blue irides at all ages (Heinroth 1903; pers. obs.). Juvenile and immature *C. o. orru* and *C. o. cecilae* have dark irides but adults possess white irides, or these are pale blue in parts of western and northern New Guinea (Coates 2001). Adult *C. meeki* has dark brown irides, whereas juveniles have pale blue-grey to mid-brown irides. All *C. woodfordi* specimens and observations, which exclude young juveniles, have pale blue or white irides.

The flight action of *C. o. insularis* is distinctive, with rather deep but curiously hesitant wingbeats interspersed with short glides on wings held below the body, unlike the more typically crow-like flight of *C. o. orru* and *C. o. cecilae*, and the fluttering flight with shallow wingbeats of *C. meeki* and *C. woodfordi*.

C. o. insularis is common in edge and open habitats including towns and oil palm plantations, habitats used by *C. o. orru*, *C. o. cecilae* and occasionally *C. meeki*, but rare in closed-canopy forest, the primary habitat of *C. meeki* and *C. woodfordi*. It forages in the canopy and on the ground, whereas *C. o. orru* and *C. o. cecilae* forage mostly on the ground, and *C. meeki* and *C. woodfordi* feed exclusively in the canopy. *C. o. insularis* often roosts communally in large numbers as evidenced by large pre-roost flights. *C. o. orru* and *C. o. cecilae* often occur in small foraging flocks and sometimes larger roosting flocks; *C. meeki* and *C. woodfordi* do not flock. All of these taxa often shuffle their wings on alighting, in a similar fashion to cuckoo-shrikes *Coracina* spp. An equivalent of the display flight of *cecilae* has not been recorded for *C. o. orru*, *C. o. insularis*, *C. meeki* or *C. woodfordi*.

C. o. insularis is the sole host for three species of *Myrsidea* feather mites; one other species is known from *C. o. orru* and two from *C. o. cecilae* (Klockenhoff 1980).

Tobias *et al.* (2010) proposed an objective scoring system for taxa of unknown species status. Although calls have not been subject to detailed analysis in this case, they are

estimated as scoring 2, wing / tail ratio as 2, plumage differences as 2+2, and ecological and behavioural differences as 0. The total score of 8 is above the threshold of 7 which usually indicates full species status. Given the range of differences discussed above, which are of a similar magnitude to those between various Australian *Corvus* species (Rowley 1970), we propose that *C. o. insularis* is best treated as a full species. This proposal was already accepted by dos Anjos *et al.* (2009) and subsequently Clements *et al.* (2011) and the IOC (Gill & Donsker 2010).

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The authorship of the generic name *Argusianus*

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Temminck (1807: 149) employed the name *Argus* for his species *Argus giganteus*, a synonym of *Phasianus argus* Linnaeus, 1766. *Argus* Temminck, 1807, is, however, a junior homonym of *Argus* Bohadsch, 1761 [Gastropoda] and *Argus* Scopoli, 1777 [Lepidoptera]. A new name was therefore required. For many years, at least since Ogilvie-Grant's (1893) volume of the *Catalogue of birds in the British Museum* to Dickinson (2003: 61), this has usually